

Appl. No. 09/610,749
Reply dated May 25, 2005
Reply to Office Action of February 25, 2005

REMARKS

In the Office Action dated February 25, 2005, the Examiner has indicated that claims 4-6 and 9-27 are allowed, that claims 2-3, 8, 29-30, 32-33 and 37-38 are objected to, and that claims 1, 7, 28, 31 and 34-36 are rejected.

Claims 1, 7, 28, 31 and, 34-36, have been rejected under 35 USC. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Khan et al. (US patent # 6,654, 422) in view of Drynan et al. (US Patent # 4,617,657). The Applicants respectfully disagree with the determination that the Khan et al. reference is prior art to the instant application since the effective filing date of the instant application precedes the filing date of the Khan et al. reference. The filing date of the Khan et al. reference is May 14, 1999. The effective filing date of the instant application is May 5, 1997, since it is a continuation that claims the benefit of the filing date of the parent application, Application Number 08/851,010, and which is now US Patent # 6,088,342. In light of the removal of Khan et al. as a reference, Applicants request reconsideration of the rejection and consequently, the allowance of claims 1, 7, 28, 31 and, 34-36.

Claims 2-3, 8, 29-30, 32-33 and 37-38 are objected to as being dependent upon the rejected base claims 1, 7, 28, 31, and 34-36, but are noted as being allowable if rewritten in independent form. Allowance of claims 1, 7, 28, 31, and 34-36, based on the reasoning presented above, would result in the allowance of dependent claims 2-3, 8, 29-30, 32-33 and 37-38. The Applicants therefore request reconsideration of the objection, and the allowance of claims 2-3, 8, 29-30, 32-33 and 37-38.

The Applicants request the Examiner for an early allowance to issue of the application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge underpayment of any additional fees or credit any overpayment associated with this communication to Deposit Account No. 50-0270.

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Respectfully submitted,

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